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THE EDITOR IN TRANSLATION AND HIS/HER INTRATEXTUAL ROLE

Piotr Fast

In English — like in Polish — the term 'editor' is attributed to at least two types of meanings. The first, wider meaning refers to the person who designs the editorial plan, who analyses the relations between the text and the hypothetical market or the reader and takes the decisions connected with the size of the print, distribution model etc. In reality, it is a role corresponding to that of a producer in the film-making terminology. It is an undoubtedly an extratextual role, situated between the text and various contexts of the book. Thus, the matters concerned are actually the marketing decisions, such as the role of shaping the taste, the choices designing the popular reception of the work, which come from an earlier study of addressee's expectations and the economical decisions originating from that study.

As for this wider role, the name 'producer' or 'publisher' in Polish has been adopted, while the term 'editor' is used for describing different functions.

In the Polish editorial tradition there exists a term 'adjuster', which depicts a role closer to the concept of editor proposed here. Let's consider the place an intuitively recognised participant of the literary communication in preparing of a translation text.

When analysing this one should make a few elementary assumptions commonly functioning in the theoretical awareness, allowing us to specify the role division in literary communication (Okopień-Sławińska, 1971; Sawicki, 1981) — including the one in translation. First of all let's remember an obvious fact that the translator is in one way an author's representative in a new cultural and language context. Thus he supports the knowledge of sense and cultural context as well as literary conventions which are typical of the original. Further on, he does a recoding that places that source knowledge into the language and cultural system of the translation. In this second role he becomes a representative of the reader and his cultural and language system. Those are theoretically two different roles fulfilled by a substantially singular being — to simplify things, one calls the translator an addressee of the text in one code and a sender in another.

The translator, being a text addressee of the original code and a sender of another, is identified with the author, the text's sender in the literary communication role system. As it seems, not all the translator's roles allow such an identification. First of all, there is the author's (creative) role of the translator, understood as the domain of self-contained decisions, independent from the author's intention, and ultimately received as the result of his competence. In our way of thinking the area of such translator's competence — in the division of system thinking — is the choice of translating strategy: modernising or archaising, poetising or prosaising, emphasising the features corresponding with the original's cultural context — barbarising, or corresponding with the translation's cultural context, and in our case polonising etc. In the domain of non-systematic decisions there are the immediate decisions of the translator originating from various conditions of the translation process. This will be the sphere of individual acts, interfering with the original text and deforming it in comparison to the author's decisions, which originate from 'creative'

premises causing the translator's activity to be often difficult to interpret, or from the decisions taken by him constituting a compromise between the original and miscellaneous factors influencing the translator — relating to the customs connected with people's outlook on life, politics etc.

Both the choice of translation strategies and the immediate decisions of the translator deforming the text in comparison with the hypothetical author's will, are facultatively conditioned factors. They are the result of a translator's decision — familiar and rationalised or instinctive and unnoticed — and it may be that, in the intratextual system of personal roles they are the equivalent of the translator's self. In this context they are a sign of freedom, overgrowing the role of a reconstructive participant of literary communication, giving him the characteristics of the translation's text creator — the author. Another problem is whether they can be considered justified by the text, or whether they spoil the integrity of the original. This is the field of one of the major translational contestations which has been so radically manifested in Poland in the discussion on the Polish translation of *Winnie the Pooh* (Adamczyk-Garbowska, 1988). The problem lies in the fact that whether the text being in reality an adaptation rather than a translation of the original, should be condemned in translation critiques in spite of its undoubtedly significant creative cultural role concerning the coincident awareness of departure from the original. The problem is similar with the Polish translation of *The Master and Margarita* of Mikhail Bulgakov. The text, by Witold Dąbrowski and Irena Lewandowska, exists in our cultural consciousness as a congenial feat, in spite of evident violation of the text's integrity and transgressing of the translator's competences present in it (Żemła, 1992). Thus the domain of translator's freedom becomes a field for abuses, that are already pushing the discussion on this topic out of the translational sphere and into the domain of ethics. Essentially, it actually reaches a violation of basic ethical norm of our profession — it puts in doubt the axiom of the translator's commitment to act as the representant of the authors will, the only indication of which is the text. And the fact of consciousness or fortuitousness of the over-use is irrelevant here. The translator bears responsibility for the deformations that could be avoided. Thus he becomes personally responsible, for these decisions in spite of the arguments. Acting with conviction that one helps the text is also a pretence since it always disturbs the identity of the translation received from 'normal' and not critical literary communication as the original, i.e. as the source text.

For the sake of exemplification I shall mention one example in which the translator approaches the border of admissibility of reformulating the text. In an extensive poem *Чаепитие на Арбате* in third stanza, Okudzhava writes:

Самовар, как бас из хора,
напевает в вашу честь.

(Okudzhava, 1976, p. 68)

The translator, on his part, preserving the connotational meaning, formulates:

Samowar basem pieśni stare
na cześć twą dudni jak Szalapin

(Opcje, 1993, p. 34)

A standard translational technique of substitution has been used here. The concrete detailed meaning ('bass of the choir') was replaced by two qualifications ('rumbling voice' and 'Shalapin'). Both the original and translated meaning have a common

“archisem” corresponding, approximately, to ‘a low/bass voice.’ In the translation, however, a reference to Shalapin was used, bringing to mind not only a bass voice but also the Russian character. The translation differs from the original because it refers to a connotation of ‘Russian character’ which is absent in the original and different from system connotation connected with the ethnic language of the original. The characteristic is neutral and redundant in the original text. In the translation — separate from the original — the connotation of Russian character becomes a relevant feature. In the original, however, the feature of ‘Russian character’ (as in nearly every original text, where is the meaning connected with signaling the affiliation to specific culture) is not a meaning that is intentionally attributed to the text. In the cited example a substitution, typical of translational practice, reaches the borders of substituting the meanings, of acquiring the symptoms of amplification extending the original’s connotational meanings and of bearing connotations going beyond the author’s hypothetical intentions and the literal meaning of the original.

It is even easier to notice the translator’s transgressing competence in cases where his decisions are to no extent justified by textual facts. It happens, so, unfortunately, that the translator when adopting a faulty solution, tries to justify it with premises that actually have nothing to do with the matter. Josif Brodski encountered such a problem in an English translation of his poem written in 1962.

The first line of the original reads as follows:

Мы снова проживаем у залива [...]

(Brodski, 1992, I, p. 47)

An American translator George L. Kline portrays this with such interpretation:

Once more we’re living by the Bay of Naples [...]

(Brodsky, 1973, p. 46)

explaining in a footnote that he’d substituted an unlocalised ‘bay’ of the original text with ‘Bay of Naples’ because two lines later the author mentions the volcano ‘Vesuvius’, which should justify such an amplification. He doesn’t take into consideration the fact, however, that if his arguments were justified, Brodski would undoubtedly introduced “the cursed Bay of Naples” into his poem, without waiting for the translator’s kind-hearted advice.

Leaving sarcasm aside: the translator’s decisions originated from a superficial recognition of the semantics of the sonnet, which, through a concretisation of an element of presented reality, were moved from the sphere of universal meanings into the domain of immediate meanings. If one assumes that the sense of this poem advances to articulating the most universal rift in human condition, which is a visualisation of discrepancy of our short-timed existence in time and eternity of objective time and a need of marking our existence in eternal time (Fast, 1996, p. 11–25), then a reformulation concretising the spacial localisation of the poem actually prevents such an interpretation. Recalling Naples would refer to a formulation, existing in common sense ‘to see Naples and die’, which would suggest an association with fulfilment and death rather than tendency to preserve the proof of our emotional link with eternity.

The examples recalled here show the way in which the integrity of the text and the sense of the original is disturbed because of the erroneous decisions of the translator. Though we still remain in the sphere of changes caused by the translator’s activity, i.e. in the domain

of his author's competence, the accuracy or wrongness of those decisions are irrelevant. What matters actually is that the deformations of the text are proofs of the translator's freedom, and that they remain in the boundaries of his will, possibilities and competence. The translator is the personal equivalent of these deformations, understood as an intratextual personal role.

The matters differ when it comes to changes, which are inevitable (independently from the direction of decisions adopted by the translator) and which are the result of the freedom of translator's actions. Let's explain this situation by analysing some chosen fragments of literary texts. Let's use Josif Brodski's poems again.

In many of his poems an archaic word 'суть' appears. This word is no longer used apart from sacral texts, and it is the archaic form of third person plural of the verb 'to be'. Brodski uses this word in the third person singular. Not pretending to undertake a systematic analysis of this semantics of the occurrence we shall cite two of such uses to serve as an example. In *Eclogue IV (Winter)* Brodski formulates:

Сильный мороз суть откровенье телу
о его грядущей температуре [...]

(Brodsky, 1992, II, p. 102)

Стекло зацветает сложным узором: рама
суть хрустальные джунгли хвоща, укропа [...]

(Brodski, 1992, II, p. 103).

The use of the form underlined in citations has several functions (Zubova, 1996). First, from the point of view of the linguistics norm an anacoluthon, which, apart from incorrectness, bears semantics of archaity connected with this form's place in language history. Secondly, it refers to sacrality, as this form, through the reference to an Old Church Slavonic source, is associated with liturgic texts. Thirdly, it is also associated with a noun existing in the contemporary norm of Russian language homonymic to this verb form, meaning 'the essence of matter', 'the most important matter' and 'substance'. A formulation that is incorrect from the point of view of the linguistics norm bears special textual roles that are impossible to be depicted in a translation to a language in which such an incorrect form cannot be used, in the least it would become only a language mistake, a wrong usage of grammatical form, and would be stripped of all connotations that are present in the original.

The English translation of both fragments is as follows:

A bitter, brittle
cold represents, as it were a message
to the body of its final temperature [...]

(Brodsky, 1987, p. 76)

Hoarfrost jungles the windowpane with sumac,
ferns, or horsetail, with what appears
to be nursed on this glass and deprived of colour
by loneliness.

(Brodsky, 1987, p. 77)

In this case one fact is quite significant, namely that the translator is Brodski himself, and even he couldn't find a way of describing connotations carried by the analysed form.

The English fragments of the text by no means reflect this feature of the original. It is similar to the Polish translation done by the most competent translator of Brodski's poems, Stanisław Barańczak. In his translation there are no traces of Brodski's anacoluthon: neither in the meaning, nor in connotations.

Siarczysty mróz to tyle, co objawienie ciała
jego przyszłej temperatury [...]

(Brodski, 1982, p. 189)

Na szkle zakwita skomplikowany deseń:
okno to kryształowa dżungla paproci, kopru [...]

(Brodski, 1982, p. 190)

In this context, an anecdote might be worth mentioning. At International Council for Central and Eastern European Studies Congress, which took place in August 1995 in Warsaw, in one of the sections devoted to Brodski's creations, a paper analysing the semantics of the discussed verb form was delivered. In a discussion on the topic Lev Losiev, the poet's friend and the editor of his first volume published in 'Ardis' in Ann Arbor, was telling how, years ago, he had an argument with Brodski about the elimination of the incorrect formulation from the poems. Brodski was not convinced, however, and that word 'sut' stayed in his poems. This anecdote helps us realise the substance of the theoretical phenomenon discussed here. The role of the author (including the author of translation) is radically different from the role of the editor. The author can be a sender of an anacoluthon, the editor, however, will always be the side opposed to the anacoluthon and even against the author.

In the cited fragments of Brodski's poems the editor's role originates from differences of language systems on the grammatical level. Yet, it is also possible, that the editor interferes with different spheres of the text's correctness, including for example stylistical norms, lexical connectivity etc. The reason is that in different languages the resistance to certain text tricks varies considerably.

As it appears from the argument presented above, the role of the editor of original text is to represent the norm of correctness of the ethnic language. A translation editor has an analogous function. His task — as opposed to translator's role — is not so much guarding the faithfulness to the original, thus representing the author's interest, but rather inspecting the language correctness of the translated text. In the process of translation the intratextual or virtual editor is thus equivalent of text's correctness in the translation's language. He becomes a personal representative of the translation language norm.

To formulate it radically, one should say that the function of the theoretical intratextual editor is an unreserved obedience to the language correctness and normativity. The editor in translation is an obsession of text correctness marked not by the freedom of the translators' decisions but only by the differences among languages systems and by the feeling of correctness of the translation language.

A theoretically constructed editor, understood as a personal role in literary communication, is — to put it simply — a representative of the language code and should be understood as a function substantially belonging to various participants of creation of a translated work: to the author, if he authorises the text, in a specific way to the translator; to the producer, and to the editor *sensu stricto*.

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